

/995 cont./

273  
578

We should also mention that the present-day Yamana almost without exception partake avidly of alcohol whenever they can get it. When intoxicated, they quickly lose control over themselves, become pugnacious, and get into noisy, brutal quarrels, in which many a man has been badly wounded, made a cripple, or forfeited his life. Even the gentle, quiet Richard killed his first wife in a state of complete drunkenness, so Fred Lawrence declared. Such derangement with serious consequences was unknown in the better olden times.

### c. Blood Vengeance

• 628

Premeditated, serious brawls between two large groups are always the result of a murder. Inasmuch as a person's life is regarded as precious and not to be harmed (p. 880), murder is considered a most execrable deed which, for lack of an existing judicial power, must be avenged by the nearest relatives of the unfortunate victim. Blood vengeance in this case, therefore, is the equivalent of a demand for expiation of the crime which caused the death of a member of the tribe. It does not matter in the least whether death occurred immediately or some time after an attack. This idea of blood vengeance is complemented by the duty of the nearest relative of a victim to carry it out personally or to take part in carrying it out. All adults are in complete agreement on this point.

Without doubt, the fear of strict and inescapable expiation for every murderous deed contributes to everyone being carefully on guard to avoid it. Bridges (MM:IX, 215;1875) confirms this: "Fear is the powerful agent, fear of man, fear of death; without the latter there would not be the former to any profitable degree. A man is restrained from taking life by fear, fear of his friends, as well as dread of those whose vengeance he has incurred by taking the life of one of their kin. For according to native usage, and necessarily springing from it, all the kindred /996/ of a murderer are held as sharers of his offence, and frequently suffer in his stead. For though they (selfishly) may be ever so angry with their relatives, the murderer, for thus making them liable, yea, not only liable, but certain to be partners of his punishment, yet they will not give him up to death, but will avenge his death if he is killed" /cited in English/.

/996 cont./

628 As we have said, there is among the Yamana a clear and definite duty for blood vengeance, which quite generally falls upon the nearest kin of the victim. On July 29, 1859, Despard (VP:VII, 9:1860) noted: "My lads told me that the law of retaliation for murder exists in their country, and is executed by the nearest of kin" /cited in English/. Soon after this he (b):698 adds: "A murderer must expect, sooner or later, to be killed by the blood-avenger, and next of kin to the victim" /cited in English/. This way of expressing himself is rather vague. Actually, the murderous deed incenses everyone who for one reason or another was close to the victim, and together they more or less furiously strike out in revenge. Moreover, the Yamana feel that there are no limits to the measure of punishment, in case the guilty one remains alive. Bridges, on March 7, 1879, summarized these ideas, which the missionaries saw exemplified a number of times, as follows: "Fuegian etiquette and custom require that all the relatives of a murdered person should be hot and frantic in their angry demonstrations, and that they should visit their displeasure upon every connexion of the manslaughterers, each personally. Thus a man may be much hurt by a party of enraged and demon-like avengers, and though the poor fellow may have suffered ten times more than he deserved, yet another party of avengers who had not punished him themselves would not let him escape in virtue of what he had already suffered, but would, moved by their own lust of vengeance, and prescribed custom, wreak upon him further punishment. Or suppose a man has many things, and the avengers are willing to except /sic/ gifts in lieu of their right to the infliction of suffering, then every avenger expects some gift from every person liable by family connection quite as much as by participation in guilt. Thus such a season is quite a harvest-time to the aggrieved party if they have power to press their claim" /cited in English/. This means, in short, that for the rest of his life a murderer cannot escape from the importunities and demands of each of the relatives and acquaintances of his victim. In short, Bridges (e):332 emphasizes: "The duties of vengeance were strictly carried out."

The murderer's deed has grave consequences not only for him, but also for all his kin and his intimate circle of friends. The avengers, however, pounce directly on the one actually guilty. The latter, realizing what is in store for him, always flees as quickly as

/996 cont./

628 possible or, hidden by his relatives, remains under cover. Hence the avengers attack the first person they meet who has connections with the killer. They are to a certain extent justified, for, although the relatives of a criminal do not in the least condone his murderous act, nevertheless the mutual /997/ ties of family solidarity are so close and strong that they not only refuse to hand him over to the opponents, but even protect and defend him against them (416). This does not prevent them from being extremely

416. Bridges (MM:IX, 215;1875) confirms this:  
"Society, as here is constituted, supports, aids, protects, not the innocent or injured, but each clan its member, guilty or not guilty" /cited in English/.

628  
626 angry with him, precisely because, by his fateful deed, he has put them all in a very embarrassing and disquieting situation, indeed, even in serious danger (417). Truly, a murderer can no longer enjoy

417. "A murderer imperils all his friends and connections more or less, and consequently estranges them from himself" /cited in English/ (Bridges, MM:XIII, 154;1879).

life, for not only the associates of his victim give him no peace, but even his own relatives never cease their reproaches. The whole group to which he belongs scorns him, pushes him aside, and positively casts him out (418). Everyone will agree with Bridges (MM:

418. "In general," as Dabbene (b):198 asserts, "one who kills is deserted by everyone in the tribe and he must take refuge in the woods in order to live" /translated from Spanish/.

XIII, 154;1879) who characterizes this state of affairs, in its importance for the general safety of life, as "the greatest safeguard to human life we can conceive. I have witnessed the anxiety of men's minds after a quarrel, when any have been seriously injured, to

/997 cont. /

628 know how the injured party is doing when fears are felt for his death,  
626 and I have heard them express the horrible sensations which creep over them when the sense of blood-guiltiness is likely to be charged against them" /cited in English/. The attention of the people in general and of every individual group is earnestly directed toward preventing any murderous deed.

628 Whenever such an act occurs, the nearest relatives of the vic-  
302 tim adopt a special facial painting. Despard (VP:VII, 9:1860) (419)

419. Earlier Fitz-Roy (a):177 noted: "White feathers, or white down, on the fillet, is a sign of hostility, or of being prepared for war. Their white paint is added to the red when preparing for war; but the marks made are mere daubs, of the rudest, if of any design. Black is the mourning colour" /cited in English/. Dabbene (b):198 and Hyades (q):375 write in a similar vein.

has already mentioned "white stripes dotted with black, in regular rows on the face" /cited in English/. Sometimes the whole body is uniformly smeared with black. All other persons who are close to the deceased also paint themselves in some way, but usually are satisfied with a few red, white, and black lines on their faces, in an arbitrary pattern. Around their foreheads they tie a narrow strip of skin with down, apawé-a. In doing this they are following a custom that is general when death occurs. The actual decoration signifying a murder consists of several vertical red lines on the face, spreading out in rays from the level of the eyes.

628 The persons concerned set about spreading the news of the murderous deed without delay and, along with reliable friends, form a fighting group, for the duty of blood vengeance hammers insistently on everyone's conscience. It applies to every friend and relative, as is shown by the specific /998/ term matáia-magúwa, "a man against whom persons have a grudge and purpose to fight with and punish because he did not take up his and their murdered friend's cause as he ought" /cited in English/ (BD:306). When a considerable horde of avengers has banded together, the opponents,

/998 cont. /

628 who anxiously watch every development, know it, and they, too, assemble in as great a number as possible. When both parties feel equal to each other, they prepare a regular attack. The able-bodied men and women get into their canoes, after they have provided themselves with ample supplies of stones and weapons (420).

420. I have nowhere found confirmed what Fitz-Roy (a):196 maintains: "When the Fuegians are inclined to attack an enemy with stones, they generally try to raise a breastwork of boughs or logs" /cited in English/. Another fact which he (a):186 mentions, however, is correct: "Hostilities are usually carried on with slings and stones rather than by close encounters" /cited in English/. Compare Bove (e):158 and Lothrop (b):164.

[302] Persons who are old and feeble and children must remain behind in the camp. Usually it quite naturally happens that a capable yékamu or a clever, reckless fellow commands and leads the whole group. As a rule, the persons who were associated with the dead person paint their whole bodies black, and the opposing group, red.

The canoes then push off from shore and arrange themselves in an exact row so that their keels form a straight line, each about two meters apart. The so-called commander is very much on the alert to make sure that no canoe gets out of line. If it does, he hurls a stone from his sling into the water in front of the canoe as a warning. Thus lined up, the two fighting groups approach each other. During the slow journey, they stir up their excitement and fighting lust by means of loud talk, agitated gestures, and insulting calls directed at the opponents. When they are only about 20 meters apart, both sides begin hurling stones from their slings. When the two groups are close enough, they begin a furious scuffle, for as soon as the canoes touch lengthwise, the men face to face beat each other with clubs and poles, spears and harpoons. Meanwhile the women, paddling and maneuvering on either side, keep the boats of the fighting men close together. Soon the men shift over to actual wrestling; they seize each other and tug hard, opposing one

/998 cont. /

• (28) another-until both fall down or one falls overboard or the canoe slips away. In all this the women have a difficult task and are especially concerned with keeping their vessel from capsizing, since the men's movements are violent and completely unpredictable. The previous exact arrangement of the canoes is soon broken up, because, from the start, the group of attackers aims to get at the actual murderer among the opponents. When they see him, they noisily turn their entire attention to him and push toward him. The others take note of their movements and try to cover the murderer as much as possible. If the attackers succeed in getting hold of him, /999/ they beat him furiously and mercilessly. If he does not actually succumb, mortally wounded, he will at least be crippled (421). This is enough to satisfy the attackers, and they

421. Hyades (q):375 maintains that "the bodies of the slain enemies are often mutilated" /translated from French/. Among the Yamana it is not customary to mutilate the corpse of an enemy deliberately.

soon withdraw from the fight and return to their camp on the shore. The others, if they are not superior in strength, breathe a sigh of relief that some other person close to the murderer did not lose his life.

As the two groups separate, they continue to scold and sneer loudly, to hurl mockery and abuse, and to reproach each other for a long time. One person or another has suffered serious wounds, perhaps a canoe was shattered, or a fighter even drowned. In any case, each group was so hard hit that the injuries they have suffered are quite enough and they long for rest.

The lust for revenge, however, quickly flares up again if, for some reason, the murderer was not subdued. His relatives and adherents hide him or guard him in a hideout (422), but the others

422. In connection with this Bridges (VSA:XII, 260; 1864) says: "A murderer is generally disliked, but they very often escape their merited end" /cited in English/.

/999 cont. /

628 will not rest until one of them succeeds, perhaps only after many years, in ultimately killing the murderer. Some time after the fight, or particularly if it did not take place, the relatives will content themselves with a payment in compensation for the murder. BD:66 gives úa, "gifts in atonement for murder" /cited in English/. This consists of many gifts which gradually must be paid to the individual relatives for an indefinite period, since the latter feel justified in making demands over and over again (423). This is

423. Bridges (a):207 asserts: "Sometimes the murderer is suffered to live, but he is much beaten and hurt, and has to make many presents to the relatives of the dead" /cited in English/.

further confirmation that, for the rest of his life, a murderer finds no rest from his pursuers.

The story of the fight and its outcome is told far and wide, which serves somehow to interdict any act of murder. In the language of the Yamana amaiuāina is "a murderer" /cited in English/ (BD:21). The considerable number of words referring to an act of murder strongly suggests that it was not too rare an occurrence. Otherwise there would not be specific rules of procedure, such as Bridges (VSA:XI, 259:1864), for example, recognized: "If a man kills another, the friends of the dead man combine together, and hunt the murderer till they find him. If they are the stronger party, they demand the murderer to be given to them by his nearest male relative, which, if it is in his power to grant, and he refuses to comply, the avengers will take, if they can, his life, and let the murderer go free, and no more molest him. /1000/ But if the murderer is given into their power, they kill him, and it may be cut him up in pieces afterwards" /cited in English/. (Cf. Hyades [q]:375). They call the struggle of two hostile groups yamalašemōina yākuna māja, whereas they refer to the small fights and brawls simply as yākuna māja (424):

424. Among these hot-blooded Yamana, a serious attack can take place merely on the basis of a false rumor; Hyades (q):375 mentions one of this nature.

/1000 cont. /

628  
721 Although isolated quarrels and fights between two persons may have occurred often, a battle between two groups provoked by a murder was rare, for a murder is now and then secretly avenged by a single relative of the slain person. The Yamana are not familiar with actual marauding attacks by one group upon another, such as are customary elsewhere. Influential men sometimes try to mediate disputes with friendly words. Fitz-Roy (a): 179 reliably reported: "Warfare is so desultory, and on so small a scale among them, that the restraint and direction of their elders advised as they are by the doctors, is sufficient" /cited in English/. Despard (b): 717 expressed himself just as definitely: "Warfare is not fashionable among them" /cited in English/. The basic way of life among the Yamana is not such as to permit them prolonged fights and constant quarrels (425). Every murder agitates them

425. Dabbene (b): 194 is right when he says:  
"Wars, in the true sense of the word, whether  
between themselves or with neighboring tribes,  
have always been very rare" /translated from  
Spanish/.

terribly, and its effect is long-lasting. Persons who have more or less settled serious quarrels between them avoid meeting each other as much as possible.

#### G. General Social Obligations

101 The Yamana as an ethnic unit are separated from all their neighbors by natural boundaries alone. Everyone recognizes his membership in this ethnic unit by a common language and mode of life. Just as definitely as they differentiate themselves from other peoples by the name Yamana (p. 197 /untranslated/), they also simultaneously emphasize the solidarity of all fellow-tribesmen in the same area. This entails many personal rights, but also obligations of all for one and of one for the society. The rights to obtain food belong among the former; property relations are based upon the latter.

/1137 cont./

765 may leave the dwellings, make a noise, or play.

If a yamalašemōina is to be held anywhere or if it has already been held, the news about it spreads over a wide area. Everyone wants to participate in it. Occasionally a few families are late in joining the mourners. The latter, of course, are always in the mood for this ceremony and, stimulated by them, the new arrivals actually initiate it without delay. If a universally beloved and influential person is being mourned, one yamalašemōina follows another at short intervals, perhaps throughout the whole year. There is probably never a ciāraus celetra-sion that does not have a regular yamalašemōina on a particular day; the same is true of a lengthy lōna festival. The participants, however, then remain in the large assembly hut and the customary sham battle is kept within limits.

765  
628 The law of blood vengeance (p.898) is in force among our Fuegians and imposes an obligation upon the relatives and friends of the murdered person. They band together and attack the murderer along with his followers. The combat between these two groups is called yamalašemōina yākuna māia and is obligatory after a murder. It is not impossible, although there is no definite proof, that the customary sham battle which has long been held after every ordinary death or in memory of all the dead at the public yamalašemōina is derived from that first struggle after a murder, and that, in the course of time, this has become part of every general ceremony of mourning. The characteristics of the sham battle, especially the reproaches and accusations of the opposing pair, lead one to this assumption.

765  
626 The general mourning ceremony always unites several families, and since it occurs often, an individual family takes part in it at least three times a year. Its extraordinary subjective value is obvious. Each yamalašemōina irresistibly forces the individual to deep inner self-reflection and gravely reminds him of death. All those persons who have already concluded their life on earth come alive once more in his memory; their virtues and shortcomings are discussed and the transgression to which an untimely death is attributed is quite frankly noted. All this causes the individual conscience to be stirred to the depths with self-accusations. Furthermore, it is no less effective that the conduct of the individual is loudly censured during the combat by one or

586 second wife. Desertion was more frequent on the man's part than on the woman's.

588 The aged were, according to all dependable evidence, usually respected, well treated, and well cared for. Neither abandonment or killing of the aged was ordinarily practiced but may have occurred in exceptional cases.

621 Political life.—Over and above the biological family there was no closely organized larger group or constituted authority. There were no sibs, secret or other societies, or social classes, and no chiefs or ruling group or caste of any kind. Each biological family was for most practical purposes a sovereign political unit. The sense of individual independence was deep. No man took or brooked orders or dictation from any other. However, aggressive individuals of personal force and strength, especially if they had powerful kin backing, at times dominated. Older men of recognized intelligence and integrity exercised considerable moral influence.

612 The next group to the biological family was the kinship group, mostly a paternal one. The members gave mutual aid where called for, particularly in feuds and in blood-revenge activities. The kinship group, owing to common patrilocal residence, was partly, but not fully localized.

619 The five regional divisions of the *Yahgan*, each with its distinctive dialect, had very slight political significance. Members of one division were usually chary of trespassing, at least for long, upon the territory of any other division, unless there were a recognized good cause, such as grave shortage of food, partaking of a stranded whale, trading, gathering canoe bark or fire-making materials.

621 Each of the five dialectic regions was broken up into local groups, each of which appears to have been composed, mostly at least, of members related by blood or marriage (Koppers, 1926 b, p. 5). Each such local group had its own territory—that of Ushuaia, for instance, occupied 20 miles (32 km.) of coast line on Beagle Channel—and its own name derived from its locality. Like the dialectic groups,

[622] these local groups had no chiefs. The local group's chief function was that of holding the *xiésaus* initiation rite. The leader chosen therefor had authority only so long as the rite lasted. As the [621] *xiésaus* rite was an educational device contributing greatly to social conformity and solidarity, the local group's political function was chiefly an indirect pedagogical one. Loyalty to fellow members of a local group existed, but was not as strong as that to one's own kinship group.

628 There was no organized process of judicial procedure. In case [622] of murder, the victim's kin took blood revenge on the murderer or his kin, or settled with him or them by composition. At times such kinship feuds led to a sort of pitched battle, in which slings,

628 clubs, fists, and so forth were used freely, with no holds barred, but grave wounds or deaths were uncommon. Organized warfare did not exist, and the *Yahgan* had no defensive weapons. The weapons used in their feuds were primarily made for, and adapted to, hunting.

[621] Social relations within and between the dialectic and local groups appear to have been normally irenic, but violence and bloodshed were not infrequent. The friends of fighting parties usually intervened, both by persuasion and by force, to restore peace. A murder was strongly condemned, and the murderer often became an outcast. Bridges found 22 cases of homicide between 1871 and 1884—an annual rate per population something like 10 times as high as that of the United States. Mercy killings occurred for the purpose of putting an end to the sufferings of the hopelessly ill. Human sacrifice was unknown; so too was premeditated suicide.

[624] 266 The evidence that the *Yahgan* practiced no form of cannibalism—gastronomic, famine, ritual, or other—is convincing beyond all reasonable doubt. They would not even eat animals suspected of devouring human flesh.

## ECONOMIC LIFE

423 Ownership.—The *Yahgan* resented and avenged exploitative trespass upon their tribal territory or attempted occupation of any part thereof by non-*Yahgan*, Indian or White. So, too, did members of any one of the five dialectic groups (Gusinde, 1937, pp. 964-965) or, according to Koppers (1928 b, p. 176), of any one of the numerous local groups, by nonmembers. Since these local groups seemingly were chiefly kinship groups (cf. supra, Political Life), the *Yahgan* land-tenure system resembled the family-hunting-ground system. There was no exclusive tenure by kinship circles as such, by biological families, or by individuals.

619 Members of one dialectic or local group could, however, exploit the territory of other groups to secure food in grave shortage, to feast on a stranded whale, and to gather firestones and suitable canoe bark, which were found only in certain parts of the *Yahgan* territory.

422 Ownership of personal property, such as weapons, clothing, adornments, and baskets, was vested in the individual. Women and children, as well as men, had well-recognized rights to such things. The ownership of certain other things—food, hut, canoe—appears to have been vested in the biological family.

[626] Food was looked upon as the property and gift of the Supreme Being; wasting it was disrespectful to Him.

437 Title to personal property was acquired through occupation, labor, donation, and barter. Barter took two forms: plain, or exchange of goods for goods; and by exchange of presents. There was no cur-

524 Of the simpler amusements the children had several of the "follow-  
851 my-leader" type, they used a swing, they had a simple ball-game like the Ona, and they painted themselves in the style of their elders and inserted short sticks in their lips, nostrils, and eyelids. Games of these kinds have been studied by Koppers (1924).

526 The Yahgan had no foot-racing or water sports of any kind.

## FEUDS

628 The causes of quarrels among the Yahgan were such as are found among all primitive tribes, namely, insult, theft, adultery, and the

<sup>1</sup> In *South American Missionary Magazine*, London, 1884, p. 224.

## THE YAHGAN

165

death of a relative. All these called for vengeance, but the Yahgan (29) seem to have felt antipathy rather than hatred, so vengeance might be deferred for several years, during which time mutual friends might compose the quarrel.

Blood loyalty was recognized among the Yahgan, but apparently was not fiercely cherished as among the Ona. Rev. Thomas Bridges states that when a murder occurred the friends and relatives of the victim would take revenge, but the family of the murderer abandoned him and made no effort to defend him. This certainly is not customary among primitive people with a highly developed consciousness of consanguinity like the Yahgan, and perhaps Mr. Bridges' statement represents the result of missionary contact rather than the original state of affairs.

Organized warfare, during which any member of one group (721) would kill at sight any member of another group, as among the Ona, was unknown to the Yahgan, but blood revenge was sometimes executed on a relative of a murderer.

## INITIATION

Thanks to the studies of Gusinde and Koppers full and complete (881) information about the Yahgan initiation rites is available, and the reader desirous of fuller information than is given here is referred to their various publications on this subject listed in the bibliography. Two ceremonies were in use among the Yahgan, known as *shiehás* and *kina*. The first of these, celebrated by both sexes, apparently is the ancient Yahgan rite, while the other corresponds closely to the Ona *klókten* ceremony and represents culture borrowing from that tribe. Both may be described as a systematic educational course for the youth of the tribe—"going to school," the Yahgan called them.

For the *shiehás* ceremony a large domed hut (*mánaga*), elliptical (346) in outline, was erected near the encampment. The framework was of split saplings an inch or two in diameter, bent and set up to form arch-like ribs, and secured in place by a few horizontal beams (pl. xiv). These timbers were held together by lashings of gut. At either end of the hut were doors, one large to admit spectators, one small for the use of the candidates. On the roof they piled branches of the evergreen antarctic beech to afford shelter to those within, but the sides were left open to the weather. Rows of logs staked in place on the floor divided it into a central gangway